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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Note verbale dated 17 July 1997 from the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the Secretary-General and has the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Arjan Starova, addressed to the Secretary-General. The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations also has the honour to request that the above-mentioned letter be distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under items 81, 112 and 114 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

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ANNEX

Letter dated 16 July 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing you about an urgent matter that has caused deep concern to the entire Albanian nation. For more than one week, the Albanians in a number of cities and municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been subjected to widespread military and police brutality and the systematic use of violence. Since 9 July, the cities of Tetova, Gostivar, Dibra and other important municipalities like Kumanova and Likova, which are predominantly inhabited by Albanians, have been undergoing an unprecedented military presence, and their inhabitants are suffering maltreatment. The Macedonian military and special forces have indiscriminately used their truncheons and fire weapons in attacks against Albanian civilians gathered to protest peacefully against a recent decision of the Macedonian Parliament. According to reports, some Albanians have been killed and hundreds wounded, most of them with severe injuries. Around 500 Albanians have been arrested or detained, and most of them were tortured while in custody. The Macedonian authorities have also arrested some of the elected Albanian municipal officials.

This brutal intervention was preceded by the violent removal of the Albanian national flag from the municipal buildings of some cities, following the adoption by the Macedonian Parliament of a law on the use of flags. During those interventions, the municipal offices were raided by special forces, which damaged equipment and destroyed documentation.

The Republic of Albania condemns this unprecedented act of brutality against Albanians in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is the conviction of the Albanian Government that the large-scale violence used against defenceless civilians was a premeditated act against the Albanian population in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is relevant to note, in this context, that large military forces, heavily armed and equipped police, committed these brutal acts of violence only hours after the adoption of the law on the use of flags. The law had not yet entered into force. According to the Macedonian constitution, that law needed eight days after the moment of its adoption to come into effect. This exceptional and excessive use of force against Albanian civilian protesters, which was obviously unnecessary, was an intentional show of force. It aimed to suppress any peaceful and democratic attempt at equality and justice for the Albanian population. The Macedonian actions stand in a background of discrimination against the Albanian population. Their aspirations for education in the Albanian language, a basic right recognized in international human rights instruments, has been violently opposed by the Macedonian authorities, who continue to ban university education in their mother tongue for the Albanians.

Albania and Albanians are trying to give their contribution to peace and stability in the still-turbulent Balkan region, but no durable stability can be based on absurd considerations to the detriment of the vital interests of the Albanians for equality, peace and justice.

The recent excessive and unnecessary use of force against the Albanians in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia strikes a serious blow to the efforts for enhanced regional stability. It is essential to understand that the full integration and equal participation of the Albanian population in the life of that country is crucial for its durable stability and for the very existence of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Government of Albania expresses its concern at the indifference of the international community towards the recent use of violence against the Albanians in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It should be expected that the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations should condemn the excessive use of force against the Albanians.

I invite you to instruct the Commander of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) to provide you with an overall report on the recent brutal events in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I hope that after your evaluation of such a report it could be presented by you to the Security Council followed by your recommendations.

I also wish to encourage the Security Council to send a mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, composed of its members and representatives of States that are contributing troops to UNPREDEP, in order to gain first-hand information on the situation. We expect that the Security Council will continue to discharge its responsibilities in the region.

(Signed) Arian STAROVA
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania